



United States
Department of
Agriculture

**Soil
Conservation
Service**



Important Farmlands of Middlesex County Connecticut



FOREWORD

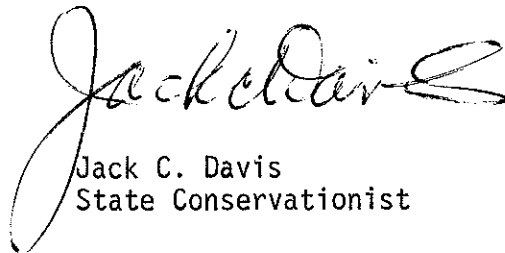
The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued the following policy statement on the significance of Prime Farmland.

"Loss of land well suited to the production of food, forage, and fiber is a matter of growing concern to the Nation. Major consideration must be given to prime farmland and long-range need to retain the productive capability and environmental quality of American agriculture. Developments that result in irreversible land use changes represent a loss of valuable natural resources. This process is dramatic in some local areas. Although at the national level, individual losses appear small, their cumulative effect can adversely impact domestic and international production."

In 1978, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 78-232, the Preservation of Connecticut Agricultural Lands. The information in this publication will be helpful to the Agricultural Preservation Committee in selecting farms to be included in the preservation program.

Others who will find the information useful are federal, state, regional, and town agencies and officials involved in making land use decisions. Planners should refer to the information in this publication for guidance in protecting some of the most productive farmlands. The Middlesex County Soil and Water Conservation District can use the information as an aid in developing their long-range plan.

For additional information, help, and copies of this report, contact the Soil Conservation Service in Middlesex County, located at the Agricultural Center, Haddam, Connecticut 06438, telephone (203) 345-4511.



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State Conservationist

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has developed criteria and guidelines for making an inventory of the important farmlands in the United States. This information is published in the Federal Register; Part 657-Prime and Unique Farmlands; Subpart A-Important Farmlands Inventory; January 31, 1978. In order to preserve the productive capacity of American agriculture, we need to know the extent and location of 1) the best land for producing food, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops; 2) the land that has special qualities for growing specific high value crops; and 3) other important lands for producing crops. The production of nursery stock, sod, and tobacco crops is not part of the national definition.

The policy of SCS is to make and keep current an inventory of prime farmland and unique farmland of the Nation. In Connecticut, the Important Farmlands Inventory is being carried out in cooperation with interested state and local agencies. The objective is to identify the extent and location of the important lands needed to produce food, feed, fiber, and forage crops.

The first Important Farmlands Inventory published by SCS in Connecticut was Tolland County. Litchfield County has also been published. The five remaining inventories after Middlesex County are scheduled for completion by 1982.

DEFINITIONS

PRIME FARMLAND

Prime farmland in Middlesex County is land best suited for producing food, feed, forage, and fiber crops, and is also available for these uses. It may be idle now or used for crops, pasture, hay, or forest. It is not in urban use or under water. Prime farmland has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to acceptable farming methods.

Prime farmland soils in Middlesex County:

- have an adequate and dependable water supply from rainfall or irrigation

- are warm enough and have a long enough growing season for adapted crops
- are neither too acid nor alkaline for good plant growth
- have acceptable salt and sodium content
- are permeable to water and air
- lack surface stones that interfere with cultivation by machinery
- are nearly level or gently sloping and not excessively erodible
- do not flood during the season of use
- are not saturated with water for long periods of time



List of Middlesex County
Soils that Qualify as
Prime Farmland (Refer to
Soil Survey of Middlesex
County, Connecticut - USDA,
Soil Conservation Service,
February 1979.)

AfA	Agawam fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	NnA	Ninigret fine sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes
AfB	Agawam fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes		
BcA	Berlin silt loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes	PbB	Paxton and Montauk fine sandy loams, 3 to 8 percent slopes
BoA	Branford silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	PnA	Penwood loamy sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes (when irrigated)
BoB	Branford silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	PnB	Penwood loamy sand, 3 to 8 percent slopes (when irrigated)
CbB	Canton and Charlton fine sandy loams, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Ps	Podunk fine sandy loam
CsB	Cheshire silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	SgA	Sudbury sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes
EfA	Ellington fine sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes	St	Suncook loamy sand (when irrigated)
HfA	Hartford sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	WkB	Wethersfield loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HfB	Hartford sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	WvA	Windsor loamy sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes (when irrigated)
LpA	Ludlow silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	WvB	Windsor loamy sand, 3 to 8 percent slopes (when irrigated)
LpB	Ludlow silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	WxA	Woodbridge fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
MgA	Manchester gravelly sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes (when irrigated)	WxB	Woodbridge fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
MyA	Merrimac sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	YaB	Yalesville fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
MyB	Merrimac sandy loam, 3 to 10 percent slopes		

ADDITIONAL
FARMLAND
OF STATEWIDE
IMPORTANCE

This is land in addition to prime farmland, that is of statewide importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, and forage crops.

Generally, additional farmland of statewide importance in Middlesex County includes land that is

nearly prime farmland and that economically produces high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. These lands have steeper slopes or are wetter than prime farmland. Some may produce as high a yield as prime farmland if conditions are favorable.

List of Middlesex County
Soils that Qualify as
Additional Farmland of
Statewide Importance (Refer
to Soil Survey of Middle-
sex County, Connecticut -
USDA, Soil Conservation
Service, February 1979.)

BoC Branford silt loam,
8 to 15 percent slopes

CsC Cheshire silt loam,
8 to 15 percent slopes

HkC Hinckley gravelly
sandy loam, 3 to 15
percent slopes

MgC Manchester gravelly
sandy loam, 3 to 15
percent slopes

PbC Paxton and Montauk
fine sandy loams,
8 to 15 percent slopes

Rb Raypol silt loam

Ru Rumney fine sandy loam

Rv Rumney Variant silt
loam

Wd Walpole sandy loam

WkC Wethersfield loam
8 to 15 percent slopes

Wr Wilbraham silt loam

YaC Yalesville fine sandy
loam, 8 to 15 percent
slopes



The National Criteria
also includes:

UNIQUE
FARMLAND

Unique farmland is land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high-value food and fiber crops. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed

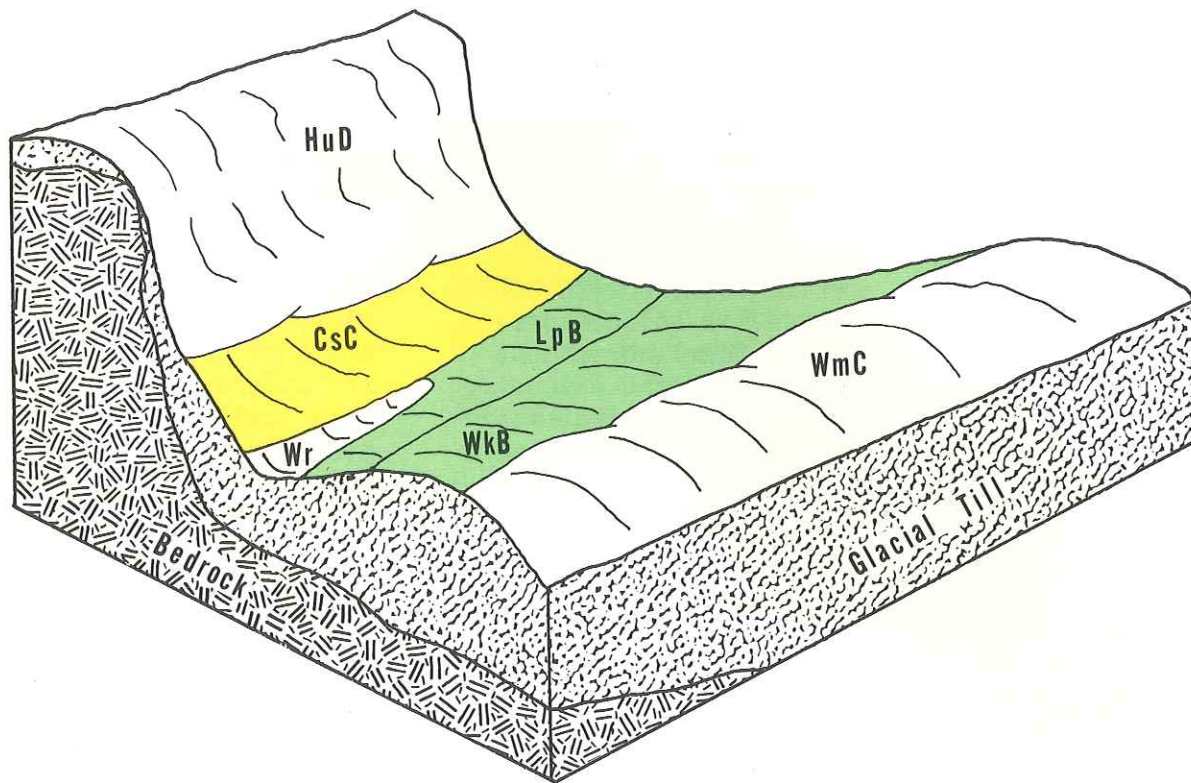
to economically produce sustained high quality and/or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Examples are such crops as citrus, tree nuts, olives, and cranberries.

ADDITIONAL
FARMLAND
OF LOCAL
IMPORTANCE

In some local areas there is concern for certain additional farmlands for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oil seed crops, even though those lands are

not identified as having national or statewide importance. These lands may include whole farms or areas designated for agriculture by local ordinance.

A TYPICAL REPRESENTATION
OF IMPORTANT FARMLANDS
IN MIDDLESEX COUNTY



PRIME FARMLAND

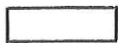
LpB Ludlow silt loam,
3 to 8 percent slopes

WkB Wethersfield loam,
3 to 8 percent slopes



ADDITIONAL
FARMLAND
OF STATEWIDE
IMPORTANCE

CsC Cheshire silt loam,
8 to 15 percent slopes



OTHER LAND

HuD Holyoke-Cheshire very
stony silt loams,
15 to 35 percent slopes

WmC Wethersfield very stony
silt loam, 15 to 35
percent slopes

Wr Wilbraham silt loam

MAP EXPLANATION

The Middlesex County Map accompanying this report, is prepared on a U.S. Geological Survey base map at a scale of 1:50,000. This can be expressed as

1 inch = 4,167 feet, or
1 inch = approximately
0.8 mile. The map displays, in color, areas and categories of Important Farmlands as follows:



Prime
Farmland

Prime farmland (26,000 acres) is colored green. Prime farmland is most contiguous and extensive in the Connecticut Valley in the northwestern part of the county. This is especially noticeable in

the towns of Durham, Middlefield, and Cromwell. Areas of prime farmland in the uplands are smaller and more scattered. It consists of the better soils -- the soils with few, if any, use problems.

Unique
Farmland

None reported.



Additional
Farmland of
Statewide
Importance

Additional farmland of statewide importance (12,500 acres) is colored yellow. These areas consist of soils that are more sloping than prime farmland and there is a greater hazard of erosion.

Other areas colored yellow consist of seasonally wet soils that need drainage improvement for good yields. Most of the additional farmland of statewide importance is adjacent to areas of prime farmland.

Additional
Farmland
of Local
Importance

None reported.



Other Land

The areas of other land are uncolored. These areas do not qualify for important farmlands. They

consist mainly of soils that are stony, steep, wet, or shallow to bedrock.



Water Areas



Intermittent Water



Urban Areas

REMARKS AND
DISCUSSION

The criteria for identification of prime farmland are based on soil properties and qualities. Source of data for the Middlesex County inventory is the published soil survey.

Some of the prime farmland is now used for growing crops; however, it can be idle, in pasture, hay, forest, or in other land uses and still qualify as prime farmland. Urban built-up land and water areas are excluded. The rationale for this approach is that land not committed to irreversible uses may be available for cropping. Decisionmakers must be aware of the long-term implications of land use options for the production of food, feed, etc., and the trade-offs involved.

Actions that put high quality farmland in irreversible uses should be initiated only if these actions are clearly in the public interest.

This inventory does not constitute a designation of any land area to a specific

land use. Such designations are the prerogative of responsible state and local officials.

Finally, it should be emphasized that prime farmland is one of the most important resources of the State and Nation. This quality land can be farmed continuously or nearly continuously without degrading the environment. It will produce the most food, feed, etc., with the least amount of energy used. It responds well to fertilizer and other chemical applications with little loss of residues by leaching or erosion. Prime farmland is most responsive to management and requires the least investment for maintaining productivity.

The Middlesex County inventory of important farmlands is dynamic. New areas may be developed and others will be converted to irreversible uses. Thus, the inventory must be updated periodically to reflect changes.

All programs and services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are available to everyone without regard to race, creed, color, sex, or national origin.
